



Wildland Fire Management and Prescribed Burns at the Fernald Preserve

The Fernald Preserve is now a publicly accessible nature preserve, with a variety of restored prairies, wetlands, and forests across the site. Its Visitors Center serves as a hub for a growing network of trails and overlooks for wildlife viewing. Because the Fernald Preserve has prairies and other “wild” areas near the public, it is considered an urban/wildland interface, and the U.S. Department of Energy requires that a Wildland Fire Management Plan be in place for the site.

The Wildland Fire Management Plan establishes strategies and goals for keeping people and facilities safe from fire at the site. Components of the plan include standards for fighting, preventing, controlling, and suppressing fire. Also included is a process for conducting prescribed burns.

Prescribed burns are planned for restored prairies at the Fernald Preserve starting in the spring of 2009. Burns will be conducted annually, usually in the spring, pursuant to the requirements of the Wildland Fire Management Plan. An Ohio Division of Natural Resources certified prescribed fire manager is responsible for planning and implementing prescribed burns at the site. Fernald Preserve personnel will conduct the prescribed burns, and the Ross Fire Department will be on call to support the burns.

These burns are intended to reduce fuel loads and thatch buildup in fire-prone areas, thereby reducing the heat and intensity of an uncontrolled fire. Numerous ecological benefits are associated with prescribed burning. Burns promote the establishment and growth of prairie plants that are well adapted to periodic fire, helping them to out-compete non-native and invasive plants, add nutrients to the soil, and make the soil warmer in the spring, which speeds up



the germination process for prairie grasses and wildflowers.

For each prescribed burn, a Prescribed Fire Burn Plan that identifies acceptable conditions for conducting a prescribed burn will be developed. Components of a Prescribed Fire Burn Plan include permits, the establishment of fire breaks and controls, the notification of local agencies, a Smoke Management Plan to limit nuisance smoke and the deterioration of air quality, controls for the protection of natural resources and property, weather monitoring, anticipated fire behavior, the implementation of the burn, and a closeout. An open burn permit will be secured from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency prior to scheduling a prescribed burn. Other applicable permits and notifications will be identified in the plan. All permits will be obtained, and all notifications will be made, before any prescribed burn is conducted.

For additional information, please contact:

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